

[1946]

My friends, some time ago I issued a challenge to the other candidates for Governor of South Carolina to debate with me on the demerits of the Barnwell ring. One of the candidates accepted that challenge and we arranged to have the debate in **Spartanburg** this week. However, the Barnwell ring, which has grown so **arrogant** and so powerful that it can now control even some of the candidates for the Governorship, demanded that the debate be called off.

While these scheming, conniving, selfish men have a strangle-hold upon a large part of the State government and now seem to be able to even tell candidates for high office what they can discuss and what they can not, they can not control Strom Thurmond. That is why they are fighting me in my campaign for Governor and are issuing one set of false statements after the other. They are fighting me because they know that their very political existence depends on my defeat, and I tell you here tonight that if you good people elect me Governor of South Carolina I will do everything in my power to eliminate their pernicious influence upon the government of our beloved State.

Even though this other candidate for Governor bowed to the dictatorship from Barnwell and withdrew from the debate, I feel that you people of Spartanburg and other Piedmont counties--people who have always opposed the unholy influence of ring rule--are entitled to know about this unholy domination of the State government by a few willful, corrupt men.

I have denounced Edgar A. Brown, President of the Senate, and Solomon Blatt, Speaker of the House, throughout this campaign, and I shall continue to denounce them for the rest of my days. I'll tell you why I do this. Their domination of the State government extends not only into the Senate and



House of Representatives, of which they are members, but even into the office of the Governor itself. But when Strom Thurmond is your Governor, their influence in that office will cease and they will be forced to scurry back to their holes.

These individuals have taken under their control many of the affairs of the State through which they can better themselves, regardless of the best interest of the State of South Carolina. They have become more and more flagrant in the abuse of their powers. They have distorted and misinterpreted the constitution, statutes and parliamentary procedure of the two houses of the Legislature, for their own benefit.

I do not claim that Barnwell's Brown and Barnwell's Blatt control everything in the State government, but I do say that they trade, scheme and connive to get an iron grip on as many departments and commissions as possible to serve their own selfish purposes.

I want to point out right here that I knew when I offered for the Judgeship of the 11th Judicial Circuit and again when I offered for the Governorship that I would get no help from the Barnwell ring. They did everything they could to keep me from being Judge and they are now doing everything in their power to defeat me for Governor. I have beaten this bunch before, and when I get through with them this time, they will know they have taken the beating of their lives.

Let's take Edgar Brown and see why he is so powerful. He is presiding officer of the Senate. He interprets all the rules. He appoints all the free conference committees. He dominates the selection of committee membership.

He is chairman of the Senate Finance Committee, which



acts on all matters concerning the State of South Carolina's money. He is a member of the State Budget Commission, which supervises the spending of money by all State departments and institutions. He is a member of the Sinking Fund Commission, which is in charge of all public property of the State, including the personnel needed to operate the huge office buildings in Columbia. He is a member of the Joint Committee on Printing, which awards all State printing contracts. He is a member of the State Retirement Board, which decides on the retirement rights of not only State employees, but employees of many counties and towns throughout the State.

He is, in addition to being Chairman of the State Finance Committee, Chairman of the Committee on Interstate Cooperation and a member of the Board of Managers of the Council of State Governments. He is a member of these Senate Committees: Banking and Insurance, Enrolled Acts, Highways, Military, Penitentiary Committee(which is really appropriate), Rules and Social Security. So you can see that hardly any legislative measure of real importance can go through the Senate without having to pass through the hands of Edgar A. Brown.

But Senator Brown is not content, with all these powers. It seems to gall his soul to see a single project in the State of South Carolina in which he does not have a finger in the pie. Last spring, when it appeared certain that the Federal Government would build a huge dam at Clarks Hill, in McCormick County, South Carolina, at a cost of millions of dollars of Federal money, developing a hydro-electric plant on Savannah River, Senator Brown became very concerned. He immediately expressed his fears that the State of South Carolina could not trust the Federal Government to build and operate the dam. He thought the State needed some one to protect its interest and of course, when a new bureau or commission was finally



set up, as a result of his agitation, Edgar A. Brown emerged as Chairman of this commission.

Senator Brown is a member of other governmental units affecting the lives of all the living beings in South Carolina, but I am happy to report that not yet, as far as I can determine, is he a member of the board of distribution of dead human bodies.

Number two of the Barnwell ring is Sol Blatt, Speaker of the House. His powers over certain phases of legislative activities are even more powerful than Edgar Brown's. Mr. Blatt is quoted by the press on Tuesday as saying: "If Mr. Thurmond knows of one dishonorable act that I have ever done in public office, it is his duty now to tell it." Well, here are a few of his acts:

Blatt presides over the House. He appoints all of its committees, he interprets all of its rules and he can recognize his favored members and disregard his opponents when legislation is being debated.

Solomon Blatt has consistently violated the constitution and the rules of the House to suit his own and Edgar's purposes. Much of the important work of the House of Representatives is done in committees and one house rule--No. 17, if you please,-- specifies that-- and I am quoting--"The speaker of the house shall not appoint more than twenty-one (21) members on any standing committee of the house."

Well, there are thirty-one standing committees listed in the official legislative manual for 1946. Of these thirty-one committees, nineteen have more, by virtue of Blatt's dictatorial appointments, than the legal twenty-one members. Most of the 12 committees whose membership is within the proper limits have relatively unimportant functions. Speaker Blatt has increased the membership of these committees to suit his own purposes and to create obligations necessary to keep himself



in the speaker's chair.

Now here is a specific example of how this intrigue works.

Seven years ago, when Blatt was up for re-election as speaker, there was a vacancy in the ways and means committee's chairmanship. Now Blatt not only wanted to retain his speakership, but he also wanted to control the ways and means committee. Winchester Smith, a fertilizer dealer of Barnwell County, was a member of the house and Blatt wanted Smith as chairman of this committee, which handles all money matters in the house. Blatt arbitrarily increased the membership of the committee to 32, which is 11 more than the rule permits.

Nearly all members of the house want to be on the ways and means committee because of its great power. Therefore, a candidate for speaker can win many voters for himself by promising other house members appointments on this committee. The chairmanship of the ways and means is filled by the committee members.

Now I do not say that Mr. Blatt increased the size of the committee to re-elect himself or to elect Barnwell County's Winchester Smith, but I do say that both Blatt and Smith were elected. Two years later, these two individuals were up for re-election again and this time Blatt increased the size of the committee to 35 with the result that both <sup>he</sup> and Smith were retained. Today the committee has 42 members--more than one third of the total house membership of 124.

Four years ago, it was necessary for Barnwell to lose one of its house members because its population had decreased. Blatt or Smith had to go. Actually Blatt stayed and Smith ended up with a full-time, well-paying job on the public service commission, which regulates and fixes rates of railroads, power companies, telephone companies, bus and



truck lines and other public utilities.

And here is how the Barnwell ring got this soft touch for Barnwell's Winchester Smith. Mr. John McMillan of Ulmers, a fine gentleman and a brother of the late Congressman McMillan, was a member of the commission from that district. I want to quote from a letter I have received from Mr. McMillan, telling of how he was smoothly removed from office and Winchester Smith of Barnwell County put in his stead.

"On the afternoon of December 12, 1941, " Mr. McMillan writes, "They (meaning Brown and Blatt) held their meeting with a dozen or more of their henchmen. It was there that they decided to give Win the job as commissioner and at that time his candidacy was announced, sending out telegrams and phone calls to members of the legislature all over the State. They even tied up my own delegation to the extent that they were told not to nominate me when the election came up a few weeks later."

Mr. McMillan goes on to say that three days after the session of the legislature began, one of their henchmen, "introduced the election resolution at 11 a. m., calling for the election at 11:30. It was all done within the course of an hour and while I was at my office only a block away. This was the first and only time a commissioner was elected within an hour from the time the resolution was introduced."

Now that ~~the~~ recitation of facts shows how this ring can completely dominate affairs of state and how they can remove from office men of the high calibre of Mr. McMillan and install their own henchmen in power.



This same Winchester Smith has been used as a tool on other occasions.

When the State Democratic Convention met in 1940, the Barnwell ring, anxious to keep all of the power in their own little tight, selected group, after a great deal of manipulation and trading, managed to have Winchester Smith elected Chairman of the State Executive Committee. Again, in 1944, they had a terrific fight on their hands, but by conniving, bulldozing and promising by his bosses, the Barnwell ring, Mr. Smith was re-elected.

But I tell you, my <sup>friends</sup> friends, these powerful politicians know they are slipping. Only a few months ago, when the Democratic party was going to elect leaders again, Mr. Smith announced that he was a candidate for re-election. Suddenly he disappeared from the race, because the Barnwell crowd realized that things were getting too hot for them and they did not want to have a defeat thrown in their faces ~~at~~ this stage of the game.

Now another pernicious piece of domination is the ring's control of free conference committees which actually write the most important legislation. Brown is automatically a member when finances are involved and he appoints two other senators--Blatt names the house members and can select anybody he wishes.

In recent years, the free conferees on the appropriation bill have actually written far-reaching legislation into the bill contrary to the constitution and members of the general assembly have had to accept these major pieces of legislation when it was rammed down their throats by the Barnwell ring.

The budget commission has tremendous authority to al-



ter State appropriations, reduce salaries and in general holds a whip hand over both State departments and the workers in those departments. Now Brown is a member of the commission and the chairman of the ways and means committee, all members of which are appointed by Blatt, ~~who~~ is another member. If this ring has control of the Governor, who is the third member, they have complete domination of State finances between legislative sessions.

The Barnwell crowd will tell you that they are powerful because of seniority. In part, that is true. That makes it all the more important for a Governor, who cannot be controlled, to serve South Carolina. If they control the Governor, they have complete power over the legislative and executive departments. They cannot control Strom Thurmond and they are desperately trying to defeat me. They cannot. Their dictatorial powers are coming to an end.

Right now the Barnwell ring is circulating lies about me and you can expect many more lies to be told about me before this campaign is concluded. They have their errand boys out right now raising money in efforts to defeat me. They have sent these satchel carriers around the State, calling on various people in an effort to get money--not their own money of course--but the hard earned cash of other people. It would be unthinkable for them to spend their own so long as they can find suckers to contribute to their campaign-loot.

America has just emerged from a conflict brought on by scheming, conniving, selfish men who gained power in Germany, Japan and Italy. Of course here in these United States some people will say, "It could never happen to us!" But I am telling you frankly, this group has become so drunken with power, so successful in their conniving and scheming, that



they do not hesitate to adopt any methods which they think will succeed. For many years, they have had a strangle-hold, not only on politics, but the very government of South Carolina itself. They have not confined their efforts to the legislative bodies to which they belong, but they have dominated and intimidated executive officers as well.

I was willing to risk my life to stamp out such ganga in Europe. I intend to devote my future to wiping out the stench and stain with which the Barnwell ring has smeared the Government of South Carolina for, lo, these many years.

Most of you know that to secure any legislation from your State Government, you have had to smile, bow, yea, even kneel to this mighty ring and its henchmen. You have longed for the day when the Government would belong to all of the people instead of the few. That day will soon come. This is not only my fight--it is the fight of every right-thinking man and woman in South Carolina. With the help of the honest and courageous people of our State, Strom Thurmond, ~~xxx~~ as your Governor, is going to eliminate this vicious, <sup>cunning and</sup> conniving gang from the affairs of South Carolina.

Good night.